



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HEADS OF FERC, INTERIOR, COMMERCE AND AGRICULTURE SIGN AGREEMENT TO IMPROVE HYDROPOWER LICENSING

The Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the Secretaries of the Interior, Commerce, and Agriculture announced today that they have signed a statement of commitment to make the hydropower licensing process more efficient and effective.

The Joint Statement of Commitment outlines the administrative reforms developed by an Interagency Task Force that was created in 1998 to improve the hydropower licensing process. By encouraging collaborative efforts and settlements, improving communication among all participants in the licensing process, and coordinating and streamlining processes at FERC and the various resource agencies, the measures developed by the Task Force will make the hydropower licensing process more timely and less costly.

FERC Chairman James J. Hoecker said: "This is a landmark agreement, which makes many practical advances in how the federal resource agencies and the Commission administer their respective statutory roles in the hydropower licensing process. We have jointly committed to make the multi-agency process more transparent and efficient. Our agreement is an important first step, and we are committed to building on this foundation to ensure that the hydropower licensing process fully supports public interest solutions that recognize both developmental and environmental values."

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Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt said: “I’m delighted with the progress this task force has made; the administrative reforms contained in the commitment statement are common sense solutions that form the basis of good government. We are committed to working together to ensure that the reforms developed by the Task Force are institutionalized in the policies and procedures of each participating agency.”

Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman said, “We have over 290 hydropower projects located on National Forest lands and this initiative streamlines the relicensing process without compromising commitments to either the public or natural resources.”

Secretary of Commerce William M. Daley said: “At Commerce, we understand the importance and the difficulty of balancing societal interests, protection of fisheries and the development of clean energy, and therefore view the achievements of the Task Force as nothing short of remarkable. The guidance developed by the Task Force will help the agencies and applicants work together to fully realize the promise of hydropower to be the exemplar of sustainable development and natural resource protection.”

Highlights of the multi-agency effort include:

- A series of reports that identify procedural and policy changes that are designed to improve the licensing process. The new policies, which have been committed to by the member agencies of the Task Force, will address significant aspects of licensing, including National Environmental Policy Act environmental review procedures; Endangered Species Act consultation; the formulation of resource agency recommendations and mandatory conditions; state mandates (*i.e.*, Clean Water Act and Coastal Zone Management Act certifications); and FERC’s Alternative Licensing Procedures.
- A commitment by the Departments of the Interior and Commerce to establish procedures that will give the public an opportunity to review and provide input on draft mandatory conditions. This process will allow the Departments and interested parties to work together to improve mandatory conditions in advance of license issuance.
- Endorsement of the Commission's Alternative Licensing Procedures, a recently developed process which allows the parties to licensing proceedings, including the federal agencies, to work collaboratively toward consensus-based public interest solutions and to shorten the time needed to process the resulting license application.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission acts on applications for hydropower licenses under the Federal Power Act after balancing economic, environmental, and other public interest

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factors. The Departments of the Interior, Commerce, and Agriculture typically participate in licensing proceedings, and are specifically authorized to impose or recommend license conditions related to Federal lands, fishways, and fish and wildlife protection.

The Joint Statement of Commitment is available on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's website at www.ferc.fed.us under "What's New."

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